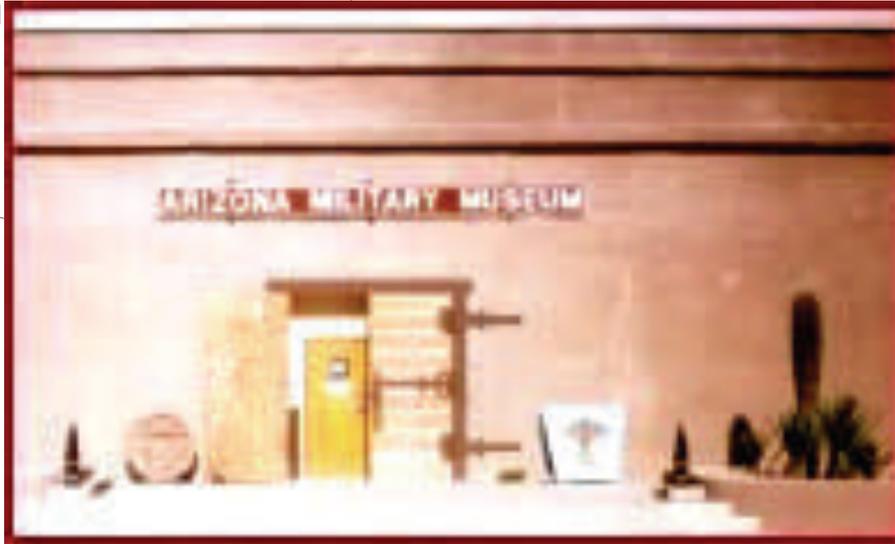


# ARIZONA MILITARY MUSEUM COURIER

Published by the Arizona National Guard Historical Society

Spring 2007 Issue 31



## HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND ARIZONA MILITARY MUSEUM HISTORY

The Arizona National Guard Historical Society is a private non-profit corporation established under the laws of Arizona and consistent with the Internal Revenue Code. It is the sponsor of the Arizona Military Museum. The Historical Society's purposes are: "To enhance the appreciation of the military history of Arizona and the contributions of the Militia of Arizona and the Arizona National Guard to the State of Arizona and to the Nation..." (Bylaws, Article I, Section 1). To accomplish its purposes, the Historical Society shall strive: "...to discover and memorialize the history of the Military of Arizona, the Arizona National Guard, and the general military history of Arizona, and to establish and maintain a museum on land leased, owned, or otherwise controlled by the Society." (Id.). The policy statement states that the Historical Society is "...to portray events, persons, and other historical information relating to...the military service of Arizonans in wars and other military actions in Arizona and around the world."

The Articles of Incorporation for the Arizona National Guard Historical Society were executed on March 28, 1975.

The Historical Society was incorporated on April 25, 1975 with the aforementioned purposes and the added purpose as stated in its policy statement: "...to portray events, persons,

and other historical information relating ...the military service of Arizonans in wars and other military actions in Arizona and around the world."

On July 14, 1978 the Arizona National guard General Staff dedicated a portion of the old arsenal building for a museum for the Historical Society.

In January 1980 the director and officers were elected who were committed to creating the museum. They did most of the demolition and construction to establish the museum.

In December 1980 the Adjutant General designated the museum an official permanent historical activity of the Arizona National Guard.

In April 1981 the General Staff dedicated the space for the East Room of the museum.

On September 12, 1981 the Arizona Military Museum had its Grand Opening.

On July 13, 1999, the Arizona National Guard Historical Society and the Arizona National Guard executed a Memorandum of Understanding reaffirming their historical relationship and mutual support.

On September 30, 2006, the Arizona Military Museum celebrated the 25th anniversary of its opening.

Published by the Arizona National Guard Historical Society  
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Museum Hours:

Saturday and Sunday  
1 pm to 4 pm

How to Contact Us:

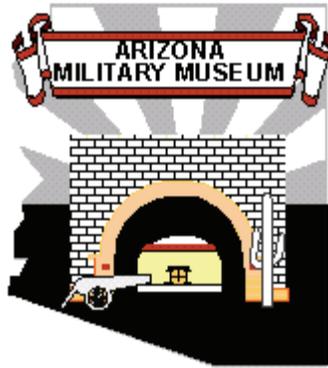
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Welcome to new members:

Trudie Cooke      Life  
Joined              2007

Cat Marcuri      Annual  
Joined              2007



# Arizona National Guard Historical Society

*Let We Forget*

## REPORT TO THE MEMBERSHIP

In September, we were awarded a \$1500 grant from the Arizona Historical Society for new exhibits relating to the Spanish Colonial period and the U.S.–Mexico War period, which we desperately needed to be more historically accurate. The two uniforms with weapons and accoutrements are now on display, and they look great.

On September 15, the museum hosted members of the American Association of State and Local Library Holdings (AASLH) for their meeting in Phoenix. We had a continental breakfast for them in the museum upstairs. On September 16, we hosted a workshop on large vehicles including military vehicles. Our large vehicles on display were examined for the class.

On September 23, MG David Rataczak and members from his helicopter unit in Viet Nam attended the museum as part of the activities of their reunion. Although several attendees commented on how much they liked the museum, the helicopter in the East room was the big hit for them. It was interesting to stand around and listen to these guys, who flew aircraft like the one in the museum, reminisce. It was obvious that the general and his old unit had a good time.

On Saturday, September 30 the Historical Society had an awards ceremony at the museum and RTI dining facility. The event celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Arizona Military Museum, and we honored the founders of the Historical Society and the museum. The honorees were Doc Ross, Doc French, Curtis Jennings, Jay Brashear, Pee Wee Johnson; and Jane Smith accepted the recognition for MG John Grady Smith. The honorees were each given a beautiful Cross felt tip pen engraved with "Arizona Military Museum." We had refreshments, and all had a good time.

On November 4, the RTI had Family Day. We were asked to have the museum open to coincide with the activities of the day, and we were glad to help. While some of our Board members manned the museum, I personally went over to eat some of the Family Day chow; it was good. Many attendees at Family Day visited the museum, and we were glad to support their event.

In April, I'll be a speaker at the Museums Association of Arizona annual convention. I'll discuss the creation, maintenance, and operation of the Arizona Military Museum.

Your President and Officers of the Historical Society are the ones who man the museum, maintain and clean its interior, receive, account for, and maintain the artifacts, do the museum administration, raise funds, interface with other museums and related organizations, and keep the museum going. And they all do it voluntarily—nobody gets paid one cent. It's all done as a labor of love to provide the Arizona National Guard and the public one of the best military museums in the United States. We could not do what we do without your support and the support of MG Rataczak and his staff. As Arizona's centennial is approaching, the museum is gearing up to be the showcase for the Arizona National Guard. We hope you'll help.

The President and Board of Directors are Col. Joseph Abodeely (Ret.)-President; BG Thomas Quarelli (Ret.)-Vice President; LTC Carolyn Feller (Ret.)-Secretary; Klaus Foerst-Treasurer; and the Directors are Jeanne McColgin, Anna Kroger, Dan Mardian, CSM Harry Hensell (Ret.), Rick White, Eugene Cox, George Notarpole, Steve Hoza, Cat Marcuri, and SFC Trudie Cooke (Ret.). MG David Rataczak serves as an *ex-official* member of the Board of Directors.

Joseph E. Abodeely  
Colonel (Ret AUS)  
President, Arizona National Guard Historical Society

# Those Territorial Adjutants General: How they lived and how they died

By Trudie Cooke

In 1864, Arizona became a Territory of the United States. The first appointed Territorial Adjutant General was William T. Flower. His term began on January 1, 1865 and ended that same year on September 28. He was paid \$350.50 two years later for those eight months for what a committee of the legislature reported "for services which your committee could not see..." There are only two further mentions of Flower's name. The first was on December 1, 1865 when he was named probate judge of Yuma County. The other was when he attempted to develop the Sterling Mine south of Prescott, an unsuccessful venture. There is nothing known about Flowers after that, and no photograph exists.

During 1865, the forerunners of the modern Arizona National Guard came into existence. In that same year, Congress rejected Arizona's request for \$250,000.00 to fund volunteers to fight the Apaches. As a result, the Territorial Legislature took matters into its own hands and formed five companies, designated A-F, (there was no D) to fight the Apaches. Most of the 350 or so men who mustered were Hispanics or Native Americans, the latter from the Pima (Company C) and Maricopa (Company B) tribes. Their officers were Anglos.

In all there were 22 Adjutants General of the Arizona Territory. In 1912 Arizona became a state. There are pictures of most of these men along with some biographical material. Most were military men. All were in fact interesting, colorful and some were true heroes.

After Flower's undistinguished service, Governor Goodwin appointed William H. Garvin on September 29, 1865. He was called "Colonel" thereafter. That was during the Apache wars. Garvin remained Adjutant General until his death on June 28, 1868. According to what is known of Garvin he spent a great deal of time in San Francisco getting medical treatment for an unknown illness.

James Henry Toole followed Garvin being appointed on September 7, 1868. Toole was honorably discharged from the Army on April 5, 1865. He was appointed with the rank of lieutenant colonel. He however resigned his post on December 14, 1868. Toole was elected mayor of Tucson twice, 1873-1875 and 1878-1880. Of note, he was thanked by the city council for leaving the town debt free. Toole appears to be the first adjutant general who had military experience in his background.

Daniel Hodges Stickney was appointed by Governor Goodwin on December 15, 1868 as the Adjutant General. Stickney was incarcerated for being a customs collector for the Confederates at Fort Yuma, a time he frequently referred to as "when he commanded" the fort. Stickney was at various times a prospector, merchant, hotel owner, and politician. He resigned his post in October of the next year. By February 17, 1871, he was dead from pneumonia in Tucson.

The next Adjutant General is a man of mystery. No photograph exists of him. His name is Dr. Edward Phelps, appointed Adjutant General on October 20, 1869. Where he received his medical training is unknown. He is listed as an assistant sur-

geon with the California Volunteers, 1863 – 1865. He won praise from controlling smallpox in Prescott and Tucson. He became a US Marshall for Arizona in 1866 but left the service in 1868. In 1871 while still holding the office of adjutant general, the Doctor left for Mexico on a "pleasure trip." "On January 28 the United States consul in Guaymas reported that Phelps had left for Mazatlan on a British naval vessel and it was soon obvious that he had absconded with \$12,000 in federal government funds. In March of 1872 it was reported that he had been killed on his way to Mexico City."

The next Adjutant General was a well known Arizona pioneer and highly respected. Samuel "Uncle" Hughes was appointed Adjutant General by Governor Safford in February 1871. He pleaded pressing private business and resigned on December 31, 1872. He was again appointed Adjutant General in February 1877 by Governor Safford and served until October 1878. He died in his beloved Tucson on June 20, 1917.

John Silah Vosburg served as Adjutant General from February 13, 1873 until February 1877. Vosburg also lived in Tucson and elected to remain in Tucson after Prescott was named the Arizona capital. Vosburg was a gunsmith and set up a gunsmith shop in Tucson that was very successful. He was also a Republican member of the Territorial House of Representatives where he formed a friendship with Governor Safford. Vosburg died in California on January 9, 1931.

Charles Edmund Curtiss followed Vosburg as the Adjutant General on January 18, 1877. Curtiss had a preplanned trip outside of Arizona at the time. He confirmed that he would return in June or July. However, Curtiss did not return. He died on January 22, 1879 in Cleveland, Ohio.

William Coles Bashford was appointed Adjutant General on October 27, 1878 and served until the fall of 1880. Well known and well respected throughout the Arizona Territory, Bashford was called "General Bashford." His father had been the attorney general and secretary of Arizona and he was also a delegate to Congress. Bashford was active in party politics and became the chairman of the Territorial Committee for two years. He served in several government positions and was the director and organizer of the Prescott National Bank. Later his home was restored and stands on the grounds of Sharlot Hall Museum in Prescott. He died in Los Angeles, California on March 3, 1915.

Clark Churchill came to Prescott in 1878 and became the law partner of Thomas Fitch. He resigned his partnership in 1880 and was appointed as the Adjutant General in the fall of 1880. He served until March of 1883. He was in command of the militia both at the time of the "cowboy" troubles in Cochise County and also when there was again fear of Indian raids. The latter caused the organization of some new citizen units in various towns. Eighty-seven men joined "The Phoenix Guards" and paraded through the city on September 26. Churchill died in Phoenix on April 4, 1896.

Moses Hazeltine Sherman, known as M.H. Sherman, was

Appointed Adjutant General by Governor Trible in March of 1883 and served until March 10, 1887. He too was referred to as "General," and apparently was distantly related to the Civil War General Sherman. He was a teacher, a land owner, a developer, founder of a bank, an official of the Phoenix Water Company, and an entrepreneur in public transportation. After his term as Adjutant General, he began acquiring land in southern California. One venture resulted in the creation of the city of Sherman Oaks, California. Sherman died on September 9, 1932 in California.



Moses H. Sherman. Photo courtesy of the Arizona Military Museum.

John Frank Meader was the next appointed Adjutant General. With the change in governors, J. Frank Meader was appointed on March 11, 1887 and he served until March 19, 1889 when he was appointed Territorial Auditor. He was a telegraph operator, owned a curiosity shop, a Wells Fargo agent, and was known in Prescott as "enjoying an excellent name in citizenship." He moved to Phoenix in 1889 and served on the city council for a few years. He was a Democrat and bet that Bryan would win the 1896 election; he lost. Meador also moved to California where in Los Angeles he died from throat cancer.

Frank W. Czarnowski, also a Democrat, was appointed as the Adjutant General by his friend, Governor Zulick, on March 21, 1889. But, the legislature rejected the nominee on April 8, where it remained embroiled in controversy until the new Governor took office. Though Czarnowski remained in the position of Adjutant General from March 21, 1889 until April 7, 1889, when he was replaced by William Owen O'Neill.



William "Bucky" O'Neill. Photo courtesy of Sharlot Hall Museum, Prescott, AZ.

Adjutant General William "Bucky" O'Neill was by far the most famous of the territorial Adjutants General. Had he not been killed by a sniper bullet in Cuba on July 1, 1898, O'Neill would probably have had a long distinguished political career in Arizona. O'Neill served as the Adjutant General from April 7, 1889 until the Spring of 1891. A hero of the "Old West," he was a typesetter and reporter, deputy city marshal, and editor of the Gazette. His exploits as a marshal served to further his fame in the West. He worked in Tombstone and later became an attorney. He

served in the militia in Prescott. He was the county sheriff in Yavapai County. While Adjutant General he reorganized the militia of the Territory. He was also the author of a new law on the organization of the citizen soldiers. He was very interested in the irri-



O'Neill (third from left) sits next to Theodore Roosevelt (right of O'Neill) with other Rough Riders in April of 1898. Photo courtesy of Sharlot Hall Museum, Prescott, AZ.

gation projects of Phoenix and Prescott. He was mayor of Prescott at the outbreak of the Spanish American War. He took his oath as commander of Troop A of the Rough Riders, April 28, 1898. After his death, Captain O'Neill was buried in Arlington National Cemetery. The Sharlot Hall Museum in Prescott has a great deal of interesting information on "Bucky" O'Neill—well worth seeing.

Edwin S. Gill was appointed Adjutant General in the spring of 1891. Gill was hailed as a man who "stands in high esteem among his friend and it is to be hoped will continue the good work begun and so ably carried forward by Adjutant General O'Neill." Gill was a graduate of West Point, 1879—1881. One newspaper reported that "Adjutant General E.S. Gill has made arrangements to furnish the militia with white-duck clothes and leggings for summer wear; also blanket bags and supplies will soon be furnished and the companies put on a footing that if called on suddenly to go into the field there will be no delays in procuring necessary equipment." Gill was also a reporter, editor, court clerk, US commissioner. He also died at home in Los Angeles, California on January 21, 1943.

George W. Brown followed Gill and was appointed Adjutant General June 1, 1892. He too was a reporter and a owner of several newspapers and a publishing company. In 1891 a statute was on the books, never invoked, that made all able bodied male citizens liable for military duty if needed. The actual organized units were rather small but determined and active. Brown moved to southern California around 1900, and died in Huntington Park, California on June 27, 1927.

Edward Schwartz was appointed Adjutant General by Governor Hughes in 1893 and served until 1897. He was an engraver by trade and was forced to give up that trade due to poor eyesight. He dealt in Indian artifacts and was the first curio dealer in Arizona. He died in his home in Phoenix on March 1, 1904. He was a Union officer during the Civil War, and served with distinction. During his tenure the militia of Arizona went from 300 to 600 men.

Robert Allyn Lewis served only one year as the Adjutant General, August 1, 1897 to July 31, 1898. An eventful year, he held the rank of Brigadier General while in office and helped Captain "Bucky" O'Neill organize the troops, called the Rough Riders of President Theodore Roosevelt fame, for engagement in the Spanish American War. It was said of Lewis that he "is one of the most efficient officers in the national guard,...and he is enthusiastic in his labors in the cause of an effective military organization." Lewis died in New York City on January 26, 1931.

Following Lewis, Governor Murphy named Herbert Fulwiler Robinson Adjutant General on August 5, 1898 with the rank of Brigadier General. Governor Brodie retained his service until January 1903. Upon his appointment, the press labeled him as an "ardent national guardsman." Also of note: "so limited were funds during his tenure that he maintained an office at his own expense." He was the last surviving Territorial Adjutant General and died in Santa Fe, New Mexico on May 17, 1956. A member of militia Company B, First Arizona Infantry in 1890, a year later organized as the national guard, he worked his way up to Major and retired from the guard in August 1897.

Benjamin Ward Leavell was appointed Adjutant General on January 28, 1903 and he served until August 28, 1907. He

# 2007 CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

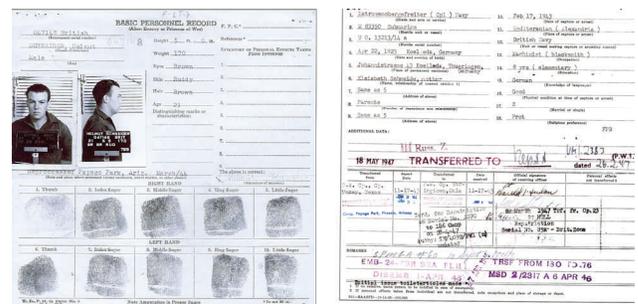
March 29 — Papago Park Military Reservation is hosting Earth Day. The Arizona Military Museum will be open from 1—3pm. Two tours are planned for 11:00am and 12:00pm.

April 11-14 — Museum Association of Arizona 25th Annual Meeting, Prescott, Arizona. Our own President of the Arizona National Guard Historical Society, Joe Abodeely, will be presenting a session on How to Run a Successful Military Museum. Another speaker at the meeting is Steve Hoza, Board Member of the Arizona National Guard Historical Society.

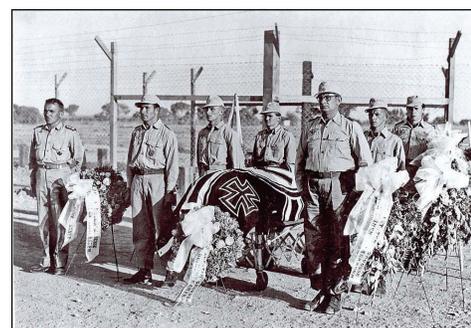
April 19 — Tentative tour of the Museum by 130 Arizona Mayors. More information later.

## New Arizona Military Museum Acquisition

The Museum received a photograph of a funeral in June of 1944, when a German prisoner died due to heart failure. Also, enclosed with the photograph was the original personnel record of the writer's grandfather as he was processed into the prisoner of war interment camps in Arizona. Mrs. Katja Huste of Cordova, TN provided the items to our museum.



Helmut Schneider was a former POW held at Papago Park, Arizona, from March of 1944 to April 1947 when he was repatriated.



No names came with this photograph of a funeral in June of 1944. The German prisoner died of heart failure while at Papago Park, Arizona.

served in the Spanish American War. After his appointment, he was informed in November of 1903 by the federal government that the Arizona national guard would receive 300 new rifles, carbines and bayonets with more equipment to come. Leavell who had tuberculosis for some time continued to work with the national guard troops even spending a week at Camp Brodie with the annual guard encampment during the last month of his life.

The office of Adjutant General went unfilled for a few months after Leavell's sudden death. Lewis Williard Coggins was appointed Adjutant General on February 10, 1908 by Governor Kibbey. He retired from the office on August 30, 1911 when Governor Sloan appointed Edwin Manny Lamson. Coggins was known as a militia and national guard man who rose from the enlisted ranks to eventually head the guard under three governors. A press commented: "...for he has to date been acting for the national guard of Arizona, in the capacity of quartermaster general, commissary general, judge advocate general, pay master, ordnance officer, inspector of small arms, now being raised to adjutant general and the governor's chief of staff." Coggins died in Phoenix on May 10, 1953.



Lewis W. Coggins. Photo courtesy of the Arizona Military Museum.

The last Territorial Adjutant General was Edwin Manny Lamson, 1911—1912. Lamson came to Phoenix in the spring of 1889 and remained there the rest of his life. He was a teacher and opened Lamson College on September 2, 1889. He enlisted in the Army during the Spanish American War and rose to the rank of Captain. After the war, Lamson enlisted in Company A, First Territorial Infantry. He retired with the rank of major. He was appointed Adjutant General on August 30, 1911 and served until February 17, 1912, leaving office upon the admission of Arizona into the Union. He died in Phoenix on April 30, 1931.

[Author's Note: While the Arizona Military Museum had most of the photographs of the Arizona Territorial Adjutants General, many came from Arizona Territorial Officials, compiled by John S. Goff, Volume V, 1991, Black Mountain Press. By the end of my research, the Arizona Military Museum now has on display all of the known photographs of all of the Arizona Territorial Adjutants General and the Arizona State Adjutants General.]

### The Arizona Memory Project

The Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records is sponsoring a new program called the Arizona Memory Project. Visit their website and enjoy the photographs and commentaries on display. In the coming weeks there will be on display, the complete listing of the Arizona Adjutants General, both Territorial and State, along with a short biography on each person. The website is: <http://azmemory.lib.az.us>. Or you can type Arizona Memory Project in the search window.

# Murder by Airplane?

By Steve Hoza

Was it *really* murder, a case of reckless flying or just a tragic accident due to the stress of accelerated wartime aviation training? This bizarre-but-true story is almost unknown in the annals of Arizona history. But first, some background to the story.

During the Second World War, Arizona trained more aviation personnel than any other state. With its almost year-round flying weather and vast stretches of relatively flat, unpopulated land, it was the ideal location to train the pilots and aircrew that would fight the war in the skies of the European and Pacific Theaters of war.



Earl Nepple in a photo taken approximately seven months before his death. Photo courtesy of Richard Nepple.

Arizona had some of the largest bases of its kind in the country (and the world). Marana Army Air Field near Tucson was the largest basic flying school in the world. The schools operated by Southwest Airways (Thunderbird I, II, Falcon Field and the Sky Harbor Cargo Division) trained more pilots, flew more miles and logged more hours than any other single aviation training facility in the country. Kingman Army Air Field graduated more aerial gunners than the population of Phoenix at the time (over 33,000).

Aviation training during the war was stressful and dangerous. It was greatly accelerated from the kinds of training a pilot (military or civilian) would receive in peacetime. Young men and women, some not even twenty years old, were flying the most modern bombers, transport aircraft and fighter planes in the world. Many saw themselves as the elite. The uniform was romantic. Everyone strove to be a pilot. Many believed they were indestructible.

Because of this hurry-up training regimen, fatal accidents were all-too common. In the continental United States between December 1941 and September 1945, nearly 15,000 men and women were killed in aviation training accidents. Wartime readers of newspapers such as *The Arizona Republic* saw headlines weekly that reported such mishaps. But many readers of the *Republic* were astonished to read the front-page headline on the morning of June 23, 1944:

## Airplane Kills Man At Wheel of Automobile

Luke Army Air Field (today Luke Air Force Base) lay to the west of Phoenix, near the base of the White Tank Mountains. During the war, it was the largest single-engine military flight school in the nation. It had two sub-bases and eight auxiliary landing fields. In 1944, cadets trained in the North American AT-6, then transitioned to single-engine fighters at the base.

On the evening of June 22, 1944, just as the sun was about

to disappear below the horizon, motorists traveling along Highway 60 between Wickenburg and Phoenix were startled to see an AT-6 from Luke Field flying down the center of the road, its landing gear extended, scarcely six feet above the pavement. Investigators would later find cut marks in the asphalt where the propeller had struck the ground. Several cars swerved to avoid a collision with the aircraft. One automobile was not as fortunate.

The left wing tip of the plane struck a car driven by 67-year-old Earl Nepple, killing him instantly. The aircraft, with its left wing tip missing, managed to make it back to Luke Field.

Nepple's son, Richard, who was in training in the army in Mississippi at the time, said in a 2005 interview what his mother Marie had told him of the accident:

*[When I first saw her] she was pretty much still in a state of shock. She said that they were going along the highway from Wickenburg going into Phoenix to visit friends over in Apache Junction on their way back to Los Angeles. They had taken the this plane coming towards them. My dad said 'Oh, God!' and he swung the wheel to the right just in time to get the car over far enough so that the wing tip went through the windshield right in front of him but missed my mother who was sitting on the other side of the seat. A hitchhiker who they had picked up previously was in the back seat and he was not injured. But dad was killed instantly. The car went out across the desert and my mother didn't know how to drive so the hitchhiker they had picked up told her to put her foot on the brakes. So she reached over and put her foot on the brake and brought the car to a stop. It was quite a ways out in the desert by that time. They got out of the car and mom went to help dad and the hitchhiker told her 'Don't do anything. He'd dead.' So then they walked to the highway, both covered with blood, and tried to hail down cars and many cars went by. They were out there an hour or two trying to get a car to stop.*

The pilot of the plane, Second Lieutenant Howard Stittsworth, and the passenger, Second Lieutenant Dean Fundingsland, were immediately arrested and ordered to stand trial in Nepple's death, "in violation of flying regulations." Both were flight instructors at Luke.

Justice was swifter some 60 years ago. The trials of both men were set up only one day after the accident. A coroner's jury in Wickenburg heard testimony from the two survivors in the car, plus other witnesses on the road. They returned a verdict of "death in his car by an airplane." Army Air Force officers that would comprise the judicial boards in the two trials were summoned from bases in Arizona, New Mexico and California. Both trials were held within one month of the accident.

Richard Nepple and his sister attended both trials:

*The mother of one of them wrote to my mother and asked her to ask for leniency for her son. My mother replied. She was quite upset to receive such a letter. She was a mother herself, of course. She replied that she had nothing to do with that, whether they received leniency or not.*

In a trial lasting only two days, Stittsworth was convicted of murder in the death of Nepple. Officers of the court were quoted in the press that they believed that this was a case without precedent in the legal history of the air forces, that a murder

charge resulted from a fatality involving US Army Air Force aircraft. The trial was held at Marana Army Air Field just north of Tucson, Arizona. Stittsworth was sentenced to life at hard labor.

In a separate trial held a few days before Stittsworth's, Fundingsland was found guilty of "permitting willful neglect and damage to government property and violation of flying regulations." He was dismissed from the service.

The mission for the two fliers on that fateful day was a routine flight to check auxiliary field lighting equipment prior to night flights scheduled for cadets at the field.

At his trial, Stittsworth claimed that he, after taking off from an auxiliary field to the north of the highway, had trouble retracting the landing gear and had no idea that he was flying so low. He also stated that the setting sun was in his eyes. Fundingsland, in the back seat of the aircraft at the time, also testified that it appeared that Stittsworth was having trouble with the gear knob. He said that, at one point, he had hunched low in the cockpit, apparently trying to work the knob. They both believed that they had struck a cactus.

*[Note: The author has flown an AT-6 from the front seat, and the gear retract lever is on the bottom left of the cockpit floor. In order to raise the landing gear, one has to momentarily lean forward, down and to the left in order to pull the knob, thus temporarily losing the line of sight out of the forward cockpit window.]*

Despite this testimony, Stittsworth was convicted based largely on the evidence of having "buzzed" the highway (i.e. clipped propeller blade tips, photographs of gouges in the pavement). Stittsworth had also been reprimanded before for reckless flying. Fellow student pilots and instructors noted on several occasions that he had demonstrated dangerous and reckless maneuvers. One report said that Stittsworth liked to try to clip the wings of aircraft around him while flying in formation.

Richard Nepple voices many of the sentiments of the court martial board:

*I think he [Stittsworth] knew what he was doing. He was buzzing the highway and he saw the car in front of him. He thought he was going to frighten the driver into going off the road and he didn't have enough sense to pull up. All he had to do was pull up just a little bit and avoid the thing. I think he thought he was going to frighten the driver into running off the road. That's my personal opinion. So I don't have much sympathy for him.*



Richard Nepple as he appeared in 2005. Photo by Steve Hoza.

These feelings were not felt by all. After the verdicts were handed down, a petition began to circulate in Phoenix protesting the outcome of the trials. The petition, signed by more than 1,300 residents, was sent to President Franklin Roosevelt in the hope of getting Stittsworth released, or at least his sentence reduced.

On November 18, 1944, President Roosevelt did commute Lt. Stittsworth's life sentence to three years at hard labor at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. After his release, he worked in the aerospace industry in California until his death from cancer in 1989. The government gave Mrs. Marie Nepple \$5,000 compensation for her husband's death. The hitchhiker, George King, received \$2,000. Mrs. Nepple would later suffer a nervous breakdown from the incident.



Nepple trial photo. Source unknown. The trial was held at Marana Army Air Field, just north of Tucson, Arizona. Today the location is called the Western Army Aviation Training Site for the Arizona Army National Guard.

# Arizona's Fallen: 100 who died in Iraq and Afghanistan

*Reprinted from The Arizona Republic, Friday, March 9, 2007*

Some of them are famous names and faces. Others were the boy and girl next door....They represent every branch of the military and every corner of the state.... Darrel Kasson \* Clint Ahlquist \* Kelly Youngblood \* Hershel Daniel McCants Jr. \* Alan E. McPeek \* Victor M. Langarica \* Russell P. Borea \* Collin R. Schockmel \* Stephen J. Raderstorf \* Aron C. Blum \* David R. Staats \* Budd M. Cote \* Billy B. Farris \* Troy L. Gilbert \* Reece D. Moreno \* Douglas C. Desjardins \* Jason D. Whitehouse \* Ryan E. Haupt \* Nicholas R. Sowinski \* Santos R. Armijo \* Casey L. Mellen \* Jason L. Merrill \* Chadwick T. Kenyon \* Mark R. Vecchione \* Damien M. Montoya \* Brandon J. Webb \* David N. Crombie \* Michael D. Stover \* Christopher M. Eckhardt \* Patrick A. Tinnell \* Joseph J. Duenas \* John J. Thornton \* Brandon S. Schuck \* John M. Holmason \* James Witkowski \* Christopher M. Poston \* Thomas H. Byrd \* Scott J. Mullen \* Kenneth E. Hunt Jr. \* Jeremiah W. Robinson \* Howard P. Allen \* Kenneth G. Ross \* Robert N. Martens \* Seferino J. Reyna \* Kevin B. Joyce \* Jeremy J. Fresques \* Russell J. Verdugo \* Kenneth J. Schall \* Michael A. Marzano \* Marty G. Mortenson \* Sam W. Huff \* Joeph L. Knott \* Nicholas E. Wilson \* Frank B. Hernandez \* Michael W. Finke Jr. \* Brian A. Mack \* Jason E. Smith \* Tina S. Time \* Joshua E. Lucero \* Michael A. Downey \* Christopher J. Lapka \* Andrew C. Ehrlich \* Michael G. Owen \* Brian S. Hobbs \* Carson J. Ramsey \* Tyler Prewitt \* Robert O. Unruh \* Michael J. Halal \* Carl Thomas \* Quinn Keith \* Joseph C. McCarthy \* Edward T. Reeder \* Harry N. Shondee Jr. \* Justin B. Onwordi \* Jeffrey David Lawrence \* Dominique J. Nicolas \* James Homes \* Pat Tillman \* Robert P. Zurheide Jr. \* Lee Duane Todacheene \* Matthew Laskowski \* Michael M. Merila \* Elijah Tai Wah Wong \* Benjamin Biskie \* Eric F. Cooke \* Christopher G. Nason \* Isaac Campoy \* Spencer Karol \* Alyssa R. Peterson \* Sean Caudella \* Joshua McIntosh \* David Sisung \* Nate Caldwell \* William T. Latham \* Raymond Losano \* Lori Piestewa \* Nathan D. White \* Fernando Padilla-Ramirez \* Mike Williams \* Jay T. Aubin

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## Firefight: The Tet Offensive

By Joe Abodeely

The Tet Offensive of 1968 began on January 31, 1968. Major cities, towns, and installations such as Saigon, Hue, Khe Sanh were subjected to violent attacks by the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) with the intent to incite a major uprising by the Vietnamese people against their American protectors. Contrary to what Walter Cronkite and other media purveyors of prevarication said to the public, the offensive was a disastrous military failure. 20/20 hindsight has shown this to be true.

In the later part of February 1968, I was an infantry lieutenant, second platoon leader of Delta Company of the 2nd battalion 7th Cavalry of the 3rd brigade of the 1st Cavalry Division (airmobile). We had been patrolling south of our position--a base camp with 175 millimeter and 8inch guns. I think we were only around twenty-five "clicks" (kilometers) from Hue, the walled imperial city with much beauty and great history, which had suffered intense fighting. We were right near Highway 1 on the main supply line to Hue and had set up a defensive perimeter with the artillery near a group of old French buildings, which were once a convent or monastery, or so I vaguely recall.

The 1st Cavalry Division or the "1st Air Cav", as we were more commonly known, was the first airmobile division of the U.S. Army and the first division to be deployed to Viet Nam. We did not usually travel by tanks or trucks or jeeps or armored personnel carriers; we either walked or were transported by

helicopters. We also received our logistical and frequent fire support from helicopters. On this day, February 27, Captain Roper (the C.O.) called me over to his C.P. and said "Skeeter" (as he used to call me and as we looked at a map), "I want you to take your platoon and go north along the river." We were hoping to make contact with the enemy.

I got my platoon ready—we checked our weapons, ammo, smoke and fragmentation grenades, gear, radios and SOI (signal operating instructions), and C rations. We walked out of the base camp perimeter and proceeded on our mission. Occasionally, we would hear the artillery at the base camp pound away on fire missions directed in support of units at the ancient city of Hue. The marines and a couple other units of the 1st Cav really saw hell during the battle of Hue. And these big guns had supported them.

It had been raining for days, but the sun was out this day. My platoon moved along in relatively open areas in a modified squad column for ease of movement, control, and security. I formed the platoon into three squads—each with a PRC-25 radio, and I had two RTOs (radio/telephone operators) with PRC-25s at my side for constant communication. When we got into the jungle, we went in single file with troops posted as flank security, and I positioned my RTOs and myself behind the lead squad for the best command and control and reaction capability.

We came to a village, which was deserted except for an old man who had his nose cut off. His face had the triangle scar of where his nose should be (like the triangle cut in a Halloween pumpkin). He told us that there were no V.C. (Viet Cong) in the area.

As we moved along on our patrol, we were still moving in a platoon column formation with my RTOs and me positioned behind the lead squad. I heard small-arms fire up in front of my lead squad. Since we all had stopped to eat lunch (our Cs), I checked to see what was happening up front. Specialist 4 Sanders (the point man) told me that he saw what appeared to be an ARVN (Army of the Republic of Viet Nam soldier) who fired at him. The ARVNs were the soldiers of the Republic of South Viet Nam—the people we were there to protect from the communist NVA (who invaded from the north) and the Viet Cong who were insurgents and “terrorists” to the people and government of South Viet Nam. Sanders said he shot at the ARVN, and he thought he hit him. He said he thought the guy was an ARVN because he was wearing green fatigues. Whoever this guy was, he wasn’t friendly.

We moved to the area where Sanders described, and we saw a small ditch. We also saw some blood, which indicated that Sanders hit the “ARVN.” At about the time we found the blood, a small “bubble” chopper flew overhead nearby and we heard automatic weapon’s fire apparently directed at the chopper. I did not want to pursue the “ARVN” whom we thought did the firing at the chopper because it looked like he was leading us away from our objective—which was to proceed along the river heading north.

We ignored his firing as we continued along the river. Finally, we got to a road, which went over a small wooden bridge, which traversed a small stream. There were trees and other thick foliage around the bridge and stream. The platoon carefully and quickly crossed the bridge and assembled behind and around an abandoned stone house surrounded with trees and other vegetation. On the side of the house opposite our location was a rice paddy clearing with a tree line and stone buildings approximately a couple hundred meters away.

Sanders came back to my location and said, “2-6, I just saw about twelve or thirteen NVA moving along in a trench” off to our left front. “2-6” was my call sign and nickname. The “2” meant second platoon, and the “6” meant leader. He assured me they were NVA because of their khaki uniforms and pith helmets.

I immediately tried to get everyone assembled in a good defensive position around the house because we weren’t dug in and were extremely vulnerable. All of a sudden all hell broke loose! RPG (rocket propelled grenade) rounds started coming in exploding on the other side of the stone house. Automatic weapons fire seemed to come continuously from our left front, front, and right front. Bullets were popping by us no matter where we moved.

I saw Sanders lying in a prone position pumping out a lot of rounds from his M-16. I saw a bullet hit his steel pot (helmet) and throw sparks as it glanced off. Sergeant Vivo, Sanders’ backup point man, stood up behind Sanders and fired several rounds. All of a sudden he got hit in the arm and in the torso.

Some of us were able to get into one of the NVA trenches near our position for cover. Bullets were coming from every-

where, and we expended a lot of ammo in return fire. A blonde kid we called “Smitty” was firing his M-60 machinegun from an old leafless tree. He was standing up behind the tree making the machinegun spew forth its rain of steel as fast as the metal links of the ammunition belt would allow without jamming the gun. Since he was not behind cover, he took a round clean through his arm. We got him to our location in the trench, gave him morphine; and he slept throughout the rest of the firefight.

When Sergeant Vivo got hit, Doc Halverson (my medic) and I crawled out of the trench under heavy enemy fire and dragged Vivo back to the trench. Vivo was gurgling; he had been shot in the arm, spun around, and shot in the lung. I found out later that he got transported to Tokyo and lived. I now had five men wounded (three with the first in-coming RPGs), Smitty, and Vivo.

Lieutenant Steelman, the artillery forward observer who came along with us, was trying desperately to get some artillery support for us. He kept calling on his radio for artillery, but all the guns were trained on Hue because there was a lot of action going on there, so we couldn’t get artillery. I saw Sergeant Rose take out a C ration can of apricots, open it, and start to eat. I asked him what the hell he was doing, and he said, “Sir, we’re surrounded; we can’t go anywhere; so why not eat the apricots?” There was some logic to his thinking. But I had a firestorm to contend with. We were completely surrounded by a much larger and entrenched force; I had wounded men; and we could not get artillery support. Things were not good.

At one point we tried to see if we could get back across the bridge. I asked a young sergeant to take a few men to see if they could back over the bridge. He said, “Sir, we’ll get killed if we go out there.” As scared as I was I knew I was going to have to lead a few men to check out a withdrawal route. I took my RTO (radio/telephone operator) and a few other men, and we slowly eased out of the NVA trench and low-crawled to a furrowed field. Bullets were still flying everywhere as we hugged the earth for dear life. As our mini “patrol” eased back toward the little wooden bridge, two snipers in trees at the bridge started firing at us. They pinned us down, and we couldn’t move. Lieutenant Steelman was able to get us an ARA (aerial rocket artillery gunship). It was a Huey armed with rocket pods and two M-60 door-gunners. We were the 1<sup>st</sup> Air Cav, so we had the lift ships to haul troops and logistics; and we had the gun-ships—the ARAs on call. As we inched toward the bridge, the snipers kept us pinned down, so we lay flat in the furrows of the field. I could hear the snap of the bullets breaking the sound barrier as they passed by. We hugged those furrows for dear life. We directed the ARA to fire on the trees with the snipers. The helicopter made a couple of passes firing rockets. The screaming hiss of the rockets, which seemed to go right over our heads, convinced me we would be hit by “friendly fire.” I just knew they would hit us—but they didn’t. The gunship did a good job of hitting where we told him, but the snipers were still there. We crawled back to the trench after the unsuccessful attempt to get back across the bridge.

The firefight continued; and at one point, we called in a couple medivac choppers for our wounded. Prior to their arrival, Sergeant Blank, my platoon sergeant, and I used machetes to try to clear a LZ (landing zone) so they could land. We hacked at saplings and brush and made a suitable LZ to pick up our wounded. For some mysterious reason, the NVA firing lightened up as we were clearing the area.

As the medivac helicopters began their descent and then landed, the NVA quit firing. We loaded the five wounded troopers on the choppers, and they took off. After the medivac choppers were in the air, out of the fighting, and on their way to save lives, the firing started up again. To this day, I don't know why the NVA stopped shooting when they did, but I'd like to think they recognized the big Red Cross on the front of the medivac ships and thereby honored the Geneva Conventions.

While all of these events were occurring, we of course notified Heavy Bones 6 (my C.O.), and he was bringing the first and third and mortar platoons up to give us some support. It seemed to take forever for them to get to our location.

Prior to their arrival, we were able to get some "4-Deuce" fire support. I never really appreciated the effectiveness of the 4.2-inch mortar until that day. When those 4.2-inch mortar rounds were called in, they came crashing down in the open rice paddy and tree line in front of us. The explosions were tremendous--trees were flying, smoke was rising--the "thump-thump", "thump-thump" had rhythm. One has to remember that a 4.2-inch round is like a 105 howitzer round; so we finally got our artillery, after all.

As Captain Roper (Heavy Bones 6) got closer to our location, he tried to pin point where we were. We'd guided him to our location over the radio, but it was difficult for the rest of the company to know where we were because we had traveled through some jungle; and now, we were taking cover in NVA trenches. To make matters even worse, first platoon was "reconning by fire" as they were approaching us from our right rear. They were shooting randomly into the jungle to secure their path of approach. Now, we had to worry about getting hit by our own guys. We stayed low, and eventually, Delta Company got to the tree line to the right of the NVA as we observed them. My platoon laid down a base of fire as the company minus (the other two rifle platoons and the mortar platoon) acted

as the maneuver force. We let loose with our M-16s, M-60s, and M-79s.

After the company swept through the enemy positions, we regrouped south of the wooden bridge. The company ran into what was estimated to be an NVA company or regimental headquarters. It was right on the direct supply line to Hue. Some of the guys told me that there was commo wire all over the place indicating a major headquarters. The Cav troopers killed an NVA officer, and one of them got his 9-millimeter pistol as a souvenir.

We called in an air strike to level the whole area, but we had to get a good distance from the target area. I think we moved about a click away, and a jet roared in and dropped its thunderous payload. We were in a prone position on the ground when the explosion occurred. The ground shook, and it was extremely loud. After the blast, I heard this whirling-buzzing sound heading my way. Then a "plop"! About two feet from my leg was a 6-inch by 5-inch chunk of metal fragment from the bomb still smoldering in the dirt.

Captain Roper and Lieutenant Gayheart, the mortar platoon leader, said I did a really good job that day. I had five guys wounded; none killed. It was that day that I made up my mind I would not lose any of my men if I could help it. By the end of my tour, I had kept my promise.

I put Sanders in for the Silver Star, and he got it. Other decorations were also awarded--none to me. I got the satisfaction that I led my men the way an infantry officer is supposed to lead, but more importantly, I kept them alive. The survival instinct and my training as a combat infantry unit commander served me well.

The day had been terrifying, exhilarating, challenging, ultra stressful, and emotionally draining, but I learned a lot about the meaning of life, infantry tactics, and myself from that experience. After Lieutenant Gayheart complimented me, I went over behind a big tree so nobody could see me and cried.

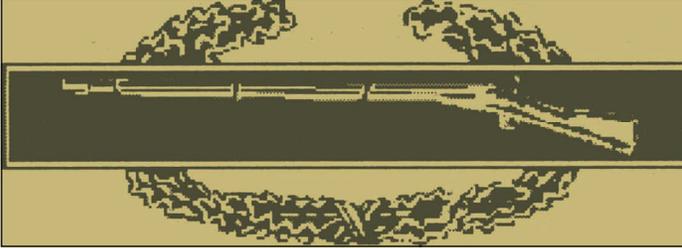


Members of the 2nd Platoon pose for a group photo. LT Joe Abodeely is in the front row, lower left. Photo courtesy of Joe Abodeely.

# COMBAT INFANTRYMAN BADGE

*Reprinted from the Saber, 1st Cavalry Division Association newsletter*

The Combat Infantryman Badge (CIB) was established by the War Department on October 27, 1943. LTG Lesley J. McNair, then the Army Ground Forces' CG, was instrumental in its creation. He originally recommended that it be called the "fighter badge." The CIB was designed to enhance morale and the prestige of the "Queen of Battle." Then Secretary of War Henry Stinson said, "It is high time we recognize in a personal way the skill and heroism of the American infantry."



Originally, the Regimental Commander, was the lowest level at which the CIB could be approved and its award was retroactive to December 7, 1941.

There was a separate provision for badge holders to receive a \$10 per month pay stipend, which was rescinded in 1948. Some of the most prominent factors that led to the creation of the CIB are: (1) The need for large numbers of well trained infantry to bring about a successful conclusion to the war and the already critical shortage of in-

fantrymen. (2) Of all soldiers, it was recognized that the infantryman continuously operated under the worst conditions and performed a mission which was not assigned to any other soldier or unit. (3) The infantry, a small portion of the total Armed Forces, was suffering the most casualties while receiving the least public recognition. (4) GEN Marshall's well known affinity for the ground forces soldier and, in particular, the infantryman. All these factors led to the establishment of the CIB, an award which would provide special recognition of the unique role of the Army infantryman, the only soldier whose daily mission is to close with and destroy the enemy and to seize and hold terrain. To be awarded the CIB the recipient must be personally present and under hostile fire.

In developing the CIB, the War Department did not dismiss out of hand or ignore the contributions of other branches. Their vital contributions to the overall war effort were certainly noted, but it was decided that other awards and decorations were sufficient to recognize their contributions.

## COMRADES AT ARMS

"I now know why men who have been to war yearn to reunite. Not to tell stories or look at old pictures. Not to laugh or weep. Comrades gather because they long to be with the men who once acted at their best, men who suffered and sacrificed together, who were stripped of their humanity. I did not pick these men. They were delivered by fate and the military. But I know them in a way I know no other men.

I have never given anyone such trust. They were willing to guard something more precious than my life. They would have carried my reputation, the memory of me. It was part of the bargain we all made, the reason we were so willing to die for one another. As long as I have memory, I will think of them all, every day. I am sure that when I leave this world, my last thought will be of my family and my comrades... Such good men."

Author Unknown--

## Museum on the Mall

The Museum Association of Arizona, the Arizona Humanities Council, and the Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records hosted the Museums on the Mall event, held on the Arizona State Capitol Senate lawn on Statehood Day, February 14, 2007. The Arizona Military Museum participated in the event. We reacquainted with old friends and made new friends. Our slide show display was a huge success.



Photo by Joe Abodeely. From left to right: Trudie Cooke, Rick White and Harry Hensell.

# ARIZONA MILITARY MUSEUM COURIER

(Published by the Arizona National Guard Historical Society, Inc.)

## MUSEUM LOCATION AND HOURS

The Arizona Military Museum is located on the **northeast corner of 52<sup>nd</sup> Street and McDowell Road**. Enter at the main entrance at 5600 East McDowell. The admission is FREE. The museum is open on **Saturdays and on Sundays from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm**. Since our officers and directors are volunteers, the museum hours are related to their (volunteers') availability. Please **call the museum to schedule tours beforehand to insure we're not closed for holidays or the summer** or for some other reason. The **Arizona Military Museum number is 602-267-2676** or you may call **(602) 253-2378**.

## A FEW GOOD MEN AND WOMEN

You can help the Arizona National Guard Historical Society by becoming a member, by making a tax-deductible donation, soliciting funds, by making the Historical Society a beneficiary in your will, or by donating historical artifacts. We invite you to serve on the Board if you are interested in Arizona military history and if you are willing to give of your time and effort to prioritize the museum activities in your already busy schedule. Call us if you are interested in becoming a board member at (602) 267-2676.

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